

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDING THE PACH SHEMEN

24.

Q. The Gemara (Shabbos 21b) says that when the Greeks entered the Heichal (the main building of the Beis HaMikdash), they contaminated all of the oil they found there. When the Chashmonaim were subsequently victorious, they searched and could only find a single flask of pure oil.

Even though they knew that it would not last for the entire eight days required to procure new oil, they decided to light the Menorah the first night. The Gemara says that a miracle occurred and it stayed lit for eight days.

The Mishnah (Midos 2:5) teaches that the oil and wine needed for the operation of the Beis HaMikdash were stored in the Lishkas Beis Shamayah – the Room of the Oil. It was located in the Ezras Nashim, not in the Heichal.

If so, why does the Gemara say that the Greeks contaminated the oil they found in the Heichal? According to the Mishnah, no oil was stored there!

A. Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky in Siach Chanukah U'Purim says that the Kohanim were concerned that the Greeks would enter the Beis HaMikdash and contaminate all of the utensils and oil they found there. Therefore, they intentionally hid oil inside the Heichal in the

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hope that it would not be discovered. The Rosh Yosef of the Mahari Eishkafa gives a similar answer.

The Shu's Betei Kehuna says that all of the oil was stored in the Lishkas Beis Shamnayah, except for the oil needed for the daily lighting the Menorah which was kept in the Heichal near the Menorah. The sefer Ezras Kohanim says that the word "Heichal" refers to entire the Beis HaMikdash.

25.

Q. The Gemara (Shabbos 21b) says that when the Chashmonaim returned to the Beis HaMikdash, they found only a single jar of oil with an intact seal of the Kohen Gadol. Rashi says that the Chashmonaim could tell that the Yevanim had not found it.

Where did they find it, and how did they know that the Yevanim had not made it tamei?

A. Tosefos (Shabbos 21b) suggests that the Chashmonaim found the jar lying on the floor, with its seal in the dirt so it was clear that the Greeks had not touched it. (If the Greeks were impure, they would have made it and its contents tamei simply by moving it.)

The Mordechai, the Rokeach and others suggest a different answer, that the jar was found inside a cabinet in a wall which had been sealed with the signet of the Kohen Gadol. The Chashmonaim could see from the intact seal on the cabinet that the Yevanim had not opened it.

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The Ran says that one of the reasons that the Yevanim broke or opened all of the containers of oil was that they were searching for gold and pearls which they thought were hidden inside them. When the Chashmonaim found the single jar intact, they immediately knew that the Yevanim had not found it because they would have broken it to search inside.

The Midrash L'Chanukah suggests a specific place that the Chashmonaim found the jar, which also explains why the Yevanim did not notice it. It was hidden in the Shishin, the pit located under the southwest corner of the Mizbeyach. (The Piyut for the second Shabbos Chanukah mentions this as well.)

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